

Message Text

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

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AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: THE FIGHT FOR MODERATION IN THE AUEW - A STEP

BACKWARD

REF: LONDON 7707

SUMMARY - THE FIGHT FOR MODERATION IN THE AMALGAMATED
UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS (AUEW) SUFFERED A REVERSE

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WHEN HIS UNION'S EXECUTIVE VOTED ON JUNE 24 NOT TO RECOM-

MEND JOHN BOYD, WHO WAS RECENTLY ELECTED GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE AUEW (REFTEL) AS A MEMBER OF THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL. BY AN IRONIC TWIST OF FATE, THE MAN WHOM THE EXECUTIVE NOMINATED FOR THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL SEAT IS REG BIRCH, WHO HEADS THE TINY MAOIST PARTY IN THIS COUNTRY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DECISION TO HAVE BOYD STEP DOWN AS ONE OF THE FOUR AUEW DELEGATES ON THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL WAS TAKEN AT A MEETING OF THE UNION'S SIX-MAN EXECUTIVE IN HASTINGS, BY A VOTE OF 4 TO 2. IN ANOTHER UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPMENT FOR BOYD, HE LOST HIS RIGHT TO VOTE ON THE AUEW EXECUTIVE WHEN HE BECAME GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE ORGANIZATION (OTHERWISE THE SPLIT WOULD HAVE BEEN 3 TO 3).

2. IT IS TRUE THAT NONE OF BOYD'S PREDECESSORS AS GEN. SECRETARY OF THE AUEW ACTUALLY SAT ON THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL, BUT BOYD ARGUED THAT HE DESERVED THE RIGHT TO REMAIN ON THE COUNCIL ON THE BASIS OF SENIORITY. HE TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE WAS "FLABBERGASTED" BY THE DECISION PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF HIS TRIUMPH IN THE RECENT ELECTION FOR GENERAL SECRETARY (REFTEL).

3. HIS SUCCESSOR DESIGNATE FOR THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL, BIRCH, IS AN EX-MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN WHO WAS SO FAR TO THE LEFT OF HIS FELLOW COMMUNISTS THAT HE QUIT IT SOME TIME AGO AND FORMED THE TINY MAOIST GROUP. ACCORDING TO AUEW CUSTOM HE WAS NEXT IN LINE TO BE NAMED TO THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL. TECHNICALLY IT IS POSSIBLE FOR OTHER LEADERS OF THE TUC TO STOP THE NOMINATION FROM TAKING EFFECT AT THE TUC CONGRESS THIS SEPTEMBER, BUT THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO HAPPEN. IT NOW APPEARS PROBABLE THAT BIRCH WILL BE JOINING HIS EXTREME LEFT-WING RIVAL, KEN GILL -- ALSO AN AUEW LEADER AND A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN -- ON THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL. WHILE THESE TWO MEN ARE BITTER IDEOLOGICAL RIVALS THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THEY WILL BE VOTING THE SAME WAY ON MOST ISSUES.

4. THE REMOVAL OF BOYD FROM THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT SURPRISING, BUT HE HAS ALSO HAD TO GIVE UP HIS ROLE AS SECRETARY OF THE CRAFT UNION COMMITTEE IN BRITISH STEEL CORPORATION WHEN HE BECAME GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE AUEW. IN A VERY IMPORTANT SENSE THE EXTREME LEFT MAY HAVE LOST A BATTLE WHEN HE BECAME GENERAL SECRETARY BUT IT MAY HAVE WON A MORE STRATEGIC VICTORY IN THE AFTERMATH. THE LEFT-RIGHT BATTLE IN THE AUEW, HOWEVER, IS BY NO MEANS OVER. IT IS A VOLATILE UNION AND IT WILL CON-

TINUE TO BE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. THE INTERNAL FIGHTING
IS LIKELY TO BE EVEN MORE BITTER AND VIOLENT IN THE
FUTURE.

RICHARDSON

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